

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion Volume 153 Number 24 Issue 2664 December 11, 1965
Published weekly (except July and August when it is biweekly) and distributed by The New Republic, 1244 19th St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. Phone FEderal 8-2494. Single copy 35c. Yearly subscription, \$8; Foreign, \$9; Armed Forces personnel or students, \$6.50. Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of addresses to Subscription Department, The New Republic, 381 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43301. Copyright© 1965 by Harrison-Blaine of New Jersey, Inc. Item g. Second Class Postage Paid at Washington, D. C. Indexed in Readers' Guide.

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Heading the Other Way

For years the military have itched to launch this country on a brand-new, \$20-billion defense system against incoming missiles, but hitherto the President and Defense Secretary McNamara have sensibly felt instead that what's needed is a freeze on ruinously expensive defense and weapons systems if the Russians can be got to agree. At present, the United States and the Soviet Union have enough nuclear warheads to wipe each other out several times over, and a workable anti-missile system if achievable at all wouldn't be able to cut American losses in a nuclear war much below 80 million lives.

The joint chiefs of staff are now taking advantage of the Administration's China obsession to demand that a start be made on developing an anti-missile system, ostensibly to deal with the threat allegedly posed by China's potential nuclear force - though such a threat is probably two full decades off, as far as the defense of this country is concerned. The fiscal budget for 1967, due for unveiling in January, will disclose whether the Administration has been softheaded enough to yield to the joint chiefs. In view of the additional billions of dollars that escalation of the war in Vietnam now seems certain to cost, the chances are that the Administration will defer a decision on the joint chiefs' demand, or will rather weakly compromise, by ordering a modest production plan that doesn't necessarily commit it to a full-scale building program. But the military heat will stay turned on, and a battle may develop in Congress, with members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees denouncing further postponement of an anti-missile defense.

Last week at the White House Conference on International Cooperation, a high-level committee headed by Jerome B. Wiesner, President Kennedy's science adviser and now Dean of Science at MIT, warned of at least two perilous by-products if the US embarks on an anti-missile system: (1) it will rule out any chance of an agreement between the US and Russia, such as the US itself proposed only last year, for a weapons "freeze"; (2) instead, a ballistic-missile defense designed to shoot down Chinese missiles might lead Russia and the US into what the Wiesner report calls "a violent spasm of procurement." Russia would either build more missiles, or also proceed with an anti-missile defense system; and this in turn would produce another spiral in the vicious circle, by tempting this country to increase its strategic weapons, in order to preserve its deterrent capability.

Among others on the committee with Wiesner was Roswell Gil-

patric, the former Deputy Secretary of Defense to McNamara; in an article last year in *Foreign Affairs*, Gilpatric suggested, in sharp opposition to what the joint chiefs now advocate, that there "be no production or deployment of anti-ballistic-missile systems in the absence of Soviet moves to proceed beyond experimental installations of such systems." As there has so far as is publicly known been no sign of any such Soviet moves, the Wiesner-Gilpatric committee last week urged the White House to adopt "a moratorium of at least three years on new deployment of systems for ballistic-missile defense." A moratorium on "new deployment" wouldn't hinder continuing research on an anti-missile system; this country is conducting such research, and doubtless the Russians are, too. But it's a quantum jump from that to launching into a full-scale production program.

We already possess ballistic missiles early warning systems (BMEWS). We also have defensive Nike-Hercules missiles stationed around cities, for shooting down enemy aircraft, and even anti-satellite weapons. But we have no effective defenses against launched intercontinental or sea-based missiles — and neither do the Russians despite their occasional claims to the contrary. The United States and the Soviet Union each relies on the threat of retaliation rather than the capacity to deflect an attack. Earlier this year Mr. McNamara told Congress in his annual review of defense policy that no defense spending within the general range considered for an anti-missile system "would reduce fatalities to a level much below 80 million unless the enemy delayed his attack on our cities long enough for our missile forces to play a major, damage-limiting role." The Pentagon at that time was thinking of Russia as the possible enemy; the chance of a future Chinese nuclear attack on this country was passed off with the comment that "the leadtime for additional nations to develop and deploy an effective ballistic missile system capable of reaching the US is greater than we require to deploy the defense."

Now however, just a few months later, the military chiefs deem the Chinese capable of almost anything — leading to the suspicion that the chiefs hope by playing up the possibility of a primitive Chinese nuclear threat to outflank all the solid arguments against building an ultra-expensive anti-missile system. In rebuttal of such attempts, the Wiesner committee report plays down the Chinese threat and points out that building an anti-missile system would play into the hands of the Chinese Communists by disrupting US-Soviet relations (already rendered more than usually fragile by the Vietnam war). It might disrupt US relations with Europe also: the Europeans live under threat of medium-range Soviet missiles, so why shouldn't they too demand that they get anti-missile systems?

Instead of everyone starting down such a road, the

Wiesner report proposes, in addition to its three-year moratorium on an anti-missile system, new assaults on proliferation and new attempts at disarmament:

► Nuclear-free zones in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East and, as an imaginative initiative in arms limitations, an Alaska-Siberia arms control zone centered around the Bering Straits.

► Instead of an anti-missile defense system for this country which is not really in danger of nuclear attack by China, a pledge to defend with all necessary means a nonnuclear power like India, which may fear nuclear attack or threat of nuclear attack by China; such a pledge, especially in conjunction with a nonproliferation treaty, might dissuade India from acquiring nuclear weapons and so from helping them spread.

► In Europe, a nonaggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. Defense Secretary McNamara is cold to the State Department's project of a multilateral nuclear force for the Europeans (including the Germans); but his reasoning is that an MLF isn't needed because there are already more than 5,000 nuclear warheads on European soil and he announced last week there will be a 20 percent increase in the next six months. The Wiesner report, however, wants to go a lot farther than sinking the MLF. It suggests the Russians might be willing to reduce their missiles aimed at targets in Western Europe in exchange for a cut in American ICBMs. A NATO-Warsaw nonaggression pact could reduce the danger of surprise conventional attacks in Europe, by having observers in NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, parallel troop reductions in West and East Germany by the US and Russia, and a series of trade and other arrangements between East and West Germany which could lead to some kind of confederation of the two Germanys.

► In the developing countries of the world, control of the traffic in conventional arms. Israel and Egypt between them spent a billion dollars on arms in 1963; their rates of arms spending per head are among the world's highest. The US and Russia should agree in the UN to stop pouring bombers, tanks and submarines into such areas.

► A stronger effort by the US to get China into a dialogue about arms control, get China into the UN, and get her to accept the obligations of the Charter. The report says bilateral talks with Russia about arms control turned out to be "much more useful than was initially anticipated." But Peking wants China's UN seat before joining UN-sponsored disarmament talks.

► Another try at a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty to include underground tests, perhaps using recent improvements in detection systems.

All this and more add up to a recommendation by top scientists and defense specialists that we head away from the escalation of the arms race the military chiefs seem to want, toward *de-escalation* and *disarmament*.